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ABSTRACT

The "Sound of the Day" is a color stimulation method of teaching reading in English, Chinese (both the characters and the orthographical pin-yin), and other languages. The method involves reviewing previously learned sounds, introducing a new sound each day, learning four new words which begin with the same sound, and then drawing and coloring pictures to illustrate the words. As each exercise is carried out, the student is learning not only the basic sound, but how that sound is integrated into words, as well as the meanings of the four words in the exercise. In addition, the combination of writing, drawing, and coloring reinforces learning and offers a channel for expressing feelings. The method is particularly helpful with learning-disabled and emotionally disturbed students who become easily frustrated when faced with difficult academic tasks such as learning to read. (JDD)

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The Sound of The Day, A Color Stimulation Method Of Teaching Reading (in English, Chinese, and Other Languages) To Learning Disabled and/or Emotionally Disturbed Students

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Abstract

The Sound of The Day is an auxiliary method of teaching reading phonetically which combines the use of color with reading, writing, and drawing to reinforce and augment word attack skills. This very simple but effective method may be used with any standard reading program. It is easily adapted to Chinese, both the traditional characters and the orthographical pīn-yīn, as well as to many other languages. It is especially useful with learning disabled and emotionally disturbed students.

Because it is basically so uncomplicated, devoid of technical language, and requires no expensive materials, The Sound of The Day has meaning for areas of the world where teacher training and educational resources may be limited.

The importance of a multi-modal approach to learning as well as the use of color stimulation is well documented in the literature. Elaborate, expensive color-coded phonics systems such as The Psycholinguistic Color System (Bannatyne, 1966) and Words in Color (Gattegno, 1971), were developed in the 1960s and 1970s but are rarely seen in the United States today. More recently, however, some very interesting work by Sydney Zentall of Purdue University has shown that color stimulation added to sustained complex tasks helps to normalize the performance of hyperactive children (Zentall, 1986, 1988).

Traditionally, learning disabled and emotionally disturbed students are known to become more easily frustrated when faced with difficult academic tasks such as learning to read. They also seem to become more hyperactive and irritable as the day wears on. My teaching assistant and I began developing The Sound of the Day over ten years ago as an enticement for extending academics into the afternoon hours. Each year since then we have refined and perfected our system until now we feel that we have something significant to share.

Description of The Sound of The Day

The Sound of The Day is a color stimulation method of teaching reading in English, Chinese (both the characters and the orthographical pīn-yīn), and other languages, which combines the use of color with reading, writing, and drawing to reinforce

and augment word attack skills. Intended as an auxiliary method to be used with any basal reading series, it can also be used alone. The Sound of The Day introduces a new sound each day. Each lesson involves reviewing previously learned sounds, introducing the new sound, learning four new words which begin with the same sound, and then drawing and coloring pictures to illustrate the words.

The Sound of The Day travels well and can be used almost anywhere. It can be used by a parent in a home instruction program, by school volunteers, and by classroom teachers. It can be an individual, small group, or whole class exercise.

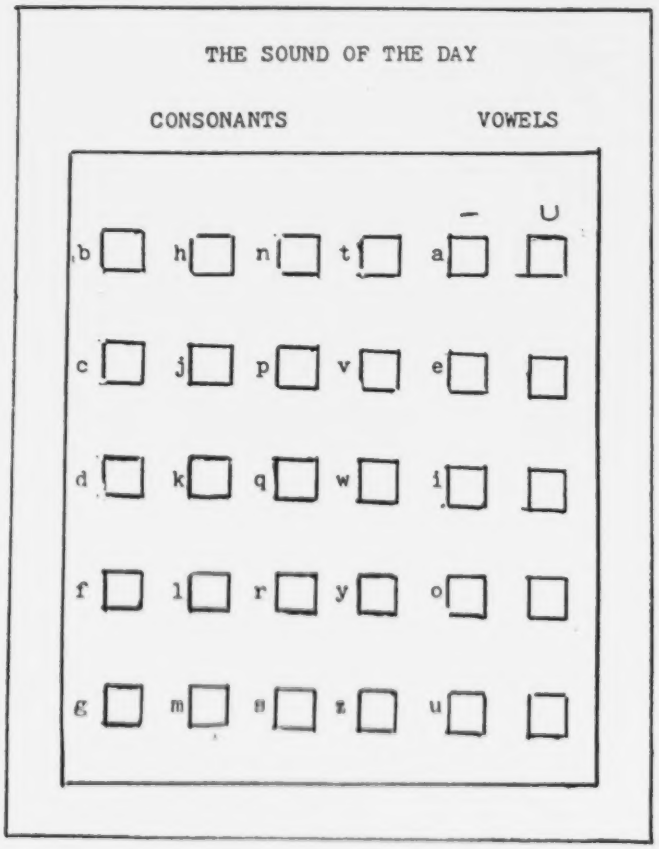
All of the basic phonetic sounds of a language are taught and reinforced in a systematic, step by step manner with the pace and the speed of the program controlled by the instructor. As each exercise is being carried out, the student is learning not only the basic sound, but how that sound is integrated into words, as well as the meanings and nuances of the four words in the exercise. In addition, the combination of writing, drawing, and coloring is a wonderful reinforcer of learning as well as a fine channel for expressing feelings.

Implementing the Technique

The first step in beginning the instruction is the preparation of a display chart containing all the basic sounds to be taught. (Figure 1). Both the teacher and the students will be referring to this chart throughout the school year. Spaces need to be left beside the basic sounds so that each day one student's drawing

may be chosen to represent the sound learned that day. Thus, the student's illustration becomes the key word for that sound for the entire year.

Figure 1
Display Chart



Using the phonics chart, the teacher begins each lesson with a brief review of previously learned sounds. As the year progresses, students may take turns being the leader of the review. Then, pointing to the next sound on the chart, the teacher says, "The Sound of The Day today is m," being careful to say the sound of the letter, not its name.

The teacher then writes this sound/letter in a previously prepared box on the chalkboard (Figure 2). The students repeat the sound and write it in the box on their copy of the form which matches the one on the chalkboard. Now the teacher asks for four words beginning with the sound m which would be fun to draw. If the responses are slow in coming, clues may be given such as, "I'm thinking of a person whose name begins with the sound m who is dear to each one of us," or, "Look around the room and see if you can find something that begins with the sound m that would be fun to draw."

Figure 2

The Sound of The Day Form

The teacher receives each word, repeats it, and writes it on the chalkboard in one of the four previously prepared spaces. The students say the word and write it in the corresponding spaces on their forms. The student who has provided the word may then be asked to suggest an idea for illustrating the word.

At this point, the teacher generates and maintains a discussion until all the students understand the meaning of the word and are clear about how to illustrate it. Sometimes it is helpful to place a small symbol or a simple picture beside the word on the chalkboard to help with the meaning or to prevent confusion with one of the other four words.

When all four words have been chosen and discussed, the students are directed to draw and to color pictures to describe them. The exercise may also be completed as a homework assignment.

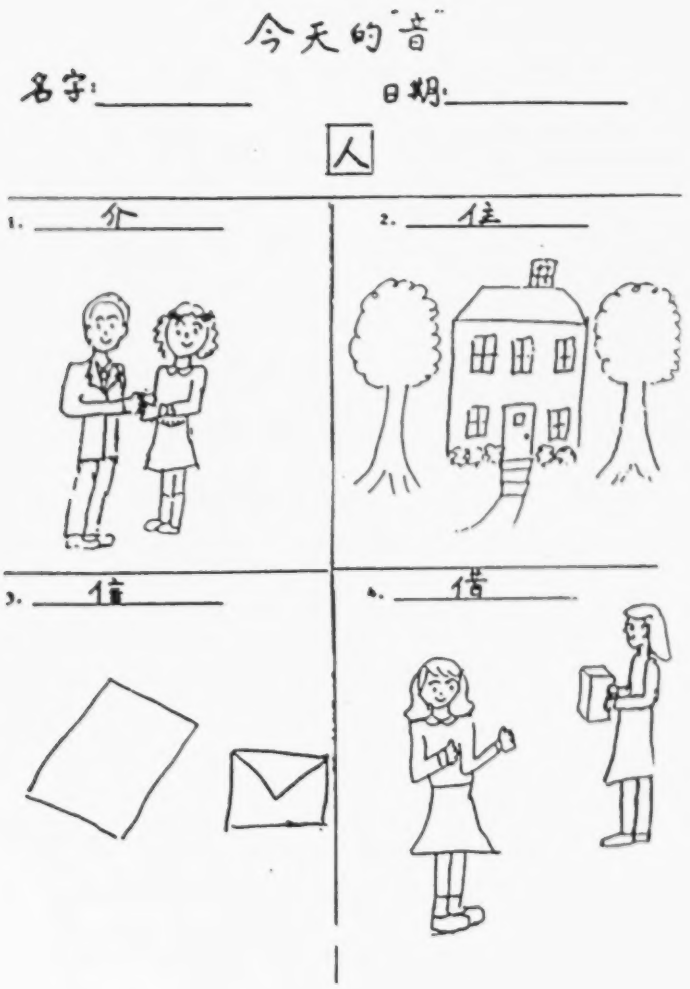
Adaptations to Other Languages

The Sound of The Day is adaptable to most languages including Chinese, Spanish, French, and Esperanto. If the Chinese orthographical pīn-yīn is used, the teacher sets up a phonics chart using the pīn-yīn alphabet. If the characters are being taught, the method becomes The Radical of The Day and students choose four words containing that radical (Figure 3). The phonics aspect of a character may also be stressed with students choosing four words with the same beginning sound as, for example, the character 人 (man).

Figure 3

The Sound of The Day

In Chinese Characters



Grading the Exercise

Students are graded on their ability to present the meaning of each word in a clear way and should not be graded on the quality of their art. In some cases, a student may need to explain his or her illustrations before the teacher can grade the exercise.

Students may be encouraged to draw and to color more neatly or more maturely, but their individuality and their creativity should always be respected.

Advantages

The Sound of The Day gives students a solid foundation of phonics skills. After the beginning sounds have been learned, the vowels, blends, digraphs, ending sounds, or any other sound combination may be taught, giving the student a wealth of word attack skills. All the while, the student is also acquiring a nice vocabulary of sight words. Learning four new words a day works out to between 700 and 800 new words a year.

Words must be understood to be illustrated and this means that students are required to think abstractly in order to complete the exercise. A word like family involves not only the concept, but also the make-up of a family, as well as the concepts of age, sex, birth order, size, appearance, placement of figures, and the family setting.

A third advantage is that The Sound of The Day helps to raise the self-confidence and self-esteem of many children. Art has value in and of itself. No one's art is better than anyone else's and each individual's work is valuable and precious. It is wonderful to see the pride in a student's face when one of his or her drawings is chosen to be the key picture on the display chart. Individually kept portfolios are also a source of much enjoyment and esteem enhancement.

A fourth advantage is that the exercise has a tranquilizing effect on hyperactive and excitable students especially in the afternoons when they are tired and their self-control mechanisms are overworked. There is something very relaxing and soothing about sitting quietly and concentrating on a non-threatening complex task, perhaps sharing crayons with a friend or a neighbor, and knowing that the results of the effort are going to be very satisfying.

A final advantage is that The Sound of The Day seems to help not only the self-image but also the development of learning disabled students. We have found that the use of a small hand mirror helps developmentally delayed students to better picture human figures and features. A student who has been drawing large empty circles for eyes can readily see in the mirror that he has pupils, irises, whites, eyelids, eyelashes, and eyebrows. While his first attempts at representing them may be crude or distorted, the good grades and the satisfaction of being able to get it down on paper seems to serve as an incentive toward more mature drawings. The growing maturity in the drawings is often matched in the child, almost as if there is some form of neurological patterning being triggered.

Summary

The Sound of The Day is a simple, uncomplicated, inexpensive method of teaching all of the basic sounds in a language. At the end of each exercise, the students have learned four examples of a new sound, four new vocabulary words, and they

have acquired a fairly comprehensive understanding of the meaning of each of those words.

In addition, they have had a very successful experience in expressing both concrete and abstract concepts in a creative way. Kept in individual folders over a period of time, students' work is a tangible and satisfying record of their progress toward reading proficiency.

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